

PRESIDENT AND CEO GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC MUSEUM

Position Profile





ABOUT THE GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC MUSEUM.

THE GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC MUSEUM (GRPM) IS THE OLDEST AND SECOND-LARGEST MUSEUM IN MICHIGAN.

It was created under the city charter in 1854, just four years after the City of Grand Rapids was established. The Museum traces its roots to the 1868 merger of the Grand Rapids Lyceum of Natural History and the Grand Rapids Scientific Club, which became the Kent Scientific Institute and later evolved into the Grand Rapids Public Museum.

Today, the Museum and Collections occupy more than 226,000 square feet and house over 250,000 artifacts and specimens that tell the stories of Grand Rapids, West Michigan, and beyond, as well as the 55-acre historic Indian Mounds site. It was the first museum in the nation to be accredited (1971) and was most recently re-accredited in 2024.

The Museum and Collections are housed on two separate Grand Rapids campuses: the Van Andel Museum Center (VAMC) and the Collections & Archives Research Center (CARC). The VAMC was built in 1994 on land adjacent to the Grand River and within walking distance of several other downtown cultural amenities, such as The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, Grand Valley State University, and DeVos Performance Hall. The VAMC is in the middle of a \$50 million expansion project, including an enhanced riverfront space, and plans to update the main entrance, gift shop, cafe, and first-floor gallery. It houses three floors of exhibits that blend history, science, and culture through interactive and hands-on displays. The space includes a combination of core and traveling exhibits. Core exhibits include: *The Streets of Old Grand Rapids*, showcasing the city's downtown history; *West Michigan Habitats*; featuring local wildlife and ecology; *Newcomers: The People of This Place*, which chronicles the history of different ethnic immigrant groups that settled in the city; and *Anishinaabek: The Original People of This Place*, an exhibit honoring Native Americans in West Michigan, which is currently undergoing a full remodel and scheduled to open in October 2026.



Traveling exhibits bring a wide variety of topics to enhance the GRPM experience as a place for all ages and interests. Recent popular exhibitions include: *Mandela: The Official Exhibition* (Spring, 2024), *Building Buddies* (2024), *The Nature of Color* (2025), *Tyrannosaurs: Meet the Family* (2025-2026), and the blockbuster exhibition *Sharks* (Summer 2025), which drew near-record attendance. Opening summer 2026 is *Unseen Oceans*, an exhibition produced by the American Museum of Natural History, where visitors will embark on a journey to discover the latest ocean science and encounter technologies that reveal our blue planet as never before.



The Museum is also home to the Roger B. Chaffee Planetarium, where visitors can view shows featuring the latest Digistar projection technology and immersive sound for a rich and realistic experience. The Planetarium hosts a rotating lineup of shows on a wide variety of topics including astronomy, Earth science, physics, entertainment, and live shows. The Museum's iconic 1928 Spillman Carousel is housed in the adjacent Cook Carousel Pavilion, overlooking the Grand River, and provides magical experiences that have delighted visitors of all ages for decades. It is an anchor for the Museum's recently expanded publicly accessible riverfront space and well-known downtown landmark.



The GRPM embraces a philosophy of being an educational institution at its core, and a place where all are welcome to spark their curiosity while having fun. There is something at the Museum for people of all ages and abilities – and to that end, accessibility is at the forefront of every Museum initiative.



Museum employees fall into the following categories:

- Executive Leadership
- Curatorial & Collections
- Education, Volunteers, Planetarium, & Public Programs
- Exhibits & Facilities
- Events & Hospitality
- Marketing, PR, & Guest Services
- Security & Safety
- Fund Development

MUSEUM ATTENDANCE HAS QUADRUPLED OVER THE LAST 15 YEARS. DURING THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, THE MUSEUM HAS WELCOMED MORE THAN 220,000 GENERAL ADMISSION VISITORS ANNUALLY. THIS INCLUDES OVER 40,000 STUDENTS WHO VISIT THROUGH FIELD TRIPS.

An integral and dynamic part of the GRPM is the Museum School, which is a Grand Rapids Public School Center of Innovation, located on several floors throughout the building, and serving grades 6 through 12. The school is founded on principles of innovative teaching utilizing design thinking techniques, an immersive environment, and real-life experiences that inspire passionate curiosity, nurture creative problem solving, cultivate critical thinking. The Public Museum High School was one of ten schools internationally to receive the XQ Super School grant for reinventing the high school experience.

The Museum has an annual budget of \$13M with a workforce of approximately 125 employees (56 full-time/69 part-time) and an endowment of roughly \$55M.

THE OPPORTUNITY.

THE GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC MUSEUM SEEKS AN INNOVATIVE, ENGAGED, AND FORWARD-THINKING LEADER WHO IS PASSIONATE ABOUT THE ROLE OF A DYNAMIC MUSEUM IN A THRIVING COMMUNITY TO SERVE AS ITS NEXT PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO). THE MUSEUM HAS BECOME A MODEL MUSEUM, SERVING AS A COMMUNITY HUB FOR EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH HISTORY, SCIENCE, & CULTURE, PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE.

The next President and CEO will embrace the mission of the Museum and its ability to provide an entertaining and educational experience to students and members of the public. The GRPM is not a museum that wishes to keep all of its collections behind glass; the Museum is proud to engage with the community in tactile and intellectual ways, encouraging visitors to be curious, touch, think, and interact with its collection. GRPM also has a robust virtual footprint with digital collections, tour videos, and a YouTube channel, featuring a significant portion of the Museum's Collection, and available for public viewing and research, which enhances and complements the more traditional museum experience. The next President and CEO will build on the Museum's successful educational approach and strive to enhance it through programmatic planning.

The new CEO will embrace the unique capacity of the Museum to use its collection for the betterment of the Grand Rapids community and will seek out additional partnerships and opportunities to expand on this mission. As a relationship builder and leader, the new CEO will embody the Museum's values and communicate its vision, mission, and strategic goals to partners in order to grow and expand into the future. As the Museum's chief executive fundraiser and leading community advocate, the next CEO will work to sustain current partnerships and grow new ones.

The CEO will leverage the talent and expertise of staff and volunteers wholly committed to the mission of the Museum and will continue to foster the GRPM culture of teamwork that includes a commitment to excellence and to community. It is a place where people delight in achieving and learning. The staff sees the Museum and themselves as innovators and educators, as stewards of the treasures in a community-based institution. As such, they work hard to create positive guest experiences through engaging exhibits and programs in a safe, clean, and welcoming space. The Museum is open daily to visitors and hosts after-hours public events, while space can be rented for private events.

The Chief Executive Officer is the Museum's senior leadership position and reports to the GRPM Foundation Board of Trustees and the Board of Art and Museum Commissioners. The CEO has executive oversight authority and responsibility for all Museum operations, staff, finances, and community relations.

The Museum President and CEO is charged with conducting its affairs in accordance with the mission, policies, bylaws, and strategic direction adopted by its Board of Trustees, nonprofit industry standards, and the professional best practices required by the American Association of Museums. They will lead in the spirit of the message on the waterfront statue situated just in front of the Museum, which reads: "This institution is dedicated to the free dissemination of knowledge to all."

▼ Key Responsibilities.

Vision and Leadership

- Sets strategic vision and goals for the Museum and establishes an implementation plan to achieve goals.
- Is responsible for the direction and oversight of all aspects of Museum operations, including institutional planning, facilities, exhibitions, collections, research, programming, hospitality and convention services, development, marketing, finance, and administration.
- Leads organizational improvement and development, and the establishment of appropriate institutional culture.

Financial Stewardship

- Oversees the development of policies and strategies for financial management, including all revenues, expenses, endowment funds, and investments.
- Ensures rigorous accountability through conservative fiscal management of resources.
- Works with staff, the Finance Committee, and the Board of Directors to prepare an annual comprehensive budget for Board approval.

Fundraising/Friendraising

- Participates in community relations and resource development in support of Board efforts to secure the long-term health of the organization.
- With the support of the Fund Development team, solicits and stewards major individual and corporate donors, providing accountability and recognition.
- Works directly with community leaders, major donors, and other leading philanthropists and government, and oversees the development of new initiatives to ensure resources are available to support programs, exhibits, and institutional offerings.

Operations and Management

- Establishes procedures for reviewing and evaluating progress toward attainment of institutional objectives and performance goals.
- Oversees the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the organization's programs and services through the leadership team and ensures that the programs and services offered by the organization contribute to the organization's mission and reflect the priorities of the Board and the institution.
- Hires and directly supervises the work of the leadership team. Coaches and mentors staff as appropriate to improve performance.
- Implements a performance management process for all staff, which includes monitoring the performance of staff on an ongoing basis and conducting annual performance reviews.





▼ Professional Qualities & Qualifications.

Work Skills, Experience, Qualifications, & Education Requirements.

Required Qualifications

- Completion of a bachelor's degree; master's degree preferred.
- 10 years of experience in a leadership role for a large division or company.

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience in strategic planning and execution, formulating policy, and developing and implementing new strategies and procedures.
- Ability to communicate and interact effectively with a wide range of constituencies in a diverse community.
- Demonstrated professional written and verbal communication and interpersonal skills.
- Ability to motivate teams and simultaneously manage several projects.
- Knowledge of public relations principles and practices.
- Skill in examining and re-engineering operations and procedures.
- Ability to develop financial plans and manage resources.
- Ability to develop and deliver presentations.
- Ability to identify and secure funding/revenue sources.
- Ability to cultivate community and regional philanthropy.
- Leadership skills and community awareness.



▼ Priorities & Expectations for Leadership.

Bringing Vision and Building Upon Success.

The new CEO of the GRPM will assume leadership of a forward-looking, successful museum engaged in hands-on, learner-centric education that uses historical, scientific, and cultural artifacts to engage its visitors. Additionally, the new CEO will be supported by an established leadership team that has coalesced around the Museum's successful and forward-looking focus on engaged education. The new CEO can anticipate leading an energetic, motivated, passionate staff who will represent the Museum externally to a community of supporters and partners.

The Strategic Plan.

Upon arrival, the new CEO will have the opportunity to initiate the next strategic plan after taking the time to develop an in-depth understanding of the Museum's multifaceted portfolio and begin to build relationships with the Museum's many internal and external partners. The new CEO will develop their own vision for growing the Museum, leveraging new opportunities as they arise.

Fundraising and Partnerships.

The CEO is responsible for the fiscal health of the Museum, which derives its estimated \$13 million operating budget from: \$2.8 million in earned revenue, \$7.2 million in Millage revenue, and \$2.5 million in fundraising revenue. The Museum also received roughly \$5.57 million in investment earnings from the endowment balance. The CEO will work with the Board to develop further philanthropic relationships. The new CEO will be actively engaged in development and fundraising, creating relationships with new supporters, stewarding existing donors, and building partnerships with other institutions that enhance the impact of the Museum. This diversity of connections will help the CEO remain innovative, entrepreneurial, and creative in their approach to fundraising and partnerships.

The Power of Education.

The Museum's foundational values as stewards of artifacts who have a responsibility to use those artifacts to engage and educate the public guide its mission and vision for its role in West Michigan. The new CEO will embrace this responsibility and work with staff to ensure that the Museum stays current and relevant in its delivery of history, science, and cultural educational content, deployment of its extensive collections, and service to the community.



GRAND RAPIDS & WEST MICHIGAN.

The City of Grand Rapids is a vibrant and diverse community, and the second largest city in the state of Michigan with a population of over 200,000 residents. The City is the County Seat of Kent County, with a metro-area population of over 1 million residents. A prominent destination for both tourism and commerce in West Michigan, Grand Rapids is located roughly 40 miles east of the beautiful beaches of Lake Michigan.

Downtown Grand Rapids has seen significant economic growth resulting from years of investments in healthcare, business, education, and entertainment. The city operates under a City Manager form of government, and downtown business planning is guided by a city-supported entity called Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc. (DGRI), which has implemented a downtown master plan called Bridge to Our Future.

The Grand River, a major state waterway, runs through downtown and serves as a focal point of downtown development and recreation. Grand Rapids has a diverse population and is a vibrant major regional hub with significant economic growth driven by healthcare, manufacturing, education, sports, arts, and culture. More than \$2 billion of public-private investments have transformed Grand Rapids into a medical research and healthcare hub of the region. The cornerstones of the flourishing medical industry in the area include Corewell Health, the city's largest employer; Van Andel Research Institute, a cancer and molecular research and educational facility; Trinity Health Care; Michigan State University College of Human Medicine; and Grand Valley State University School of Nursing. The Gerald R. Ford International Airport is located just 13 miles southeast of downtown. The airport contributes over \$7 billion annually to the local economy, serving more than 4 million passengers each year, and was voted the best small airport in the country by USA Today.



▼ History of the Region.

Thousands of years ago, the area was inhabited by the original Indigenous People, known for their large burial mounds in the Grand River Valley. Today, descendants of the Three Fires maintain a strong cultural presence in the region. Indigenous sovereign nations active in the West Michigan area include the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians and the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi

They were followed by the Ottawa people who lived in several villages along the river. A French fur trader, Louis Campau, arrived and settled in the area in 1826, followed by other Europeans who travelled to the area in the early 19th century, also propelled by fur trading activities. In the 1840's, a small group of African American families began settling in the area, and by 1850, the "Grand Valley" was incorporated as the City of Grand Rapids. Due to its heavily forested terrain and the intense logging commerce, West Michigan became an active furniture manufacturing region of the country. Grand Rapids began producing high-quality furniture, and after an international exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876, Grand Rapids soon became recognized as one of the world's leading producers of furniture. It soon earned the nickname of "Furniture City" due to its thriving furniture innovations and manufacturing industry.



In addition to the GRPM, the City of Grand Rapids is fortunate to be the home of many other vibrant cultural institutions. The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, Grand Rapids Art Museum, John Ball Zoo, Grand Rapids Children's Museum, Grand Rapids African American Museum, Broadway Grand Rapids, and the Grand Rapids Symphony, and Grand Rapids Ballet are all located within the city limits.

Downtown Grand Rapids is also home to various sports teams, entertainment destinations, and conference venues. Van Andel Arena is a 13,000-seat venue that hosts concerts year-round and is home to the Grand Rapids Griffins AHL hockey team, Grand Rapids Gold NBA G-League basketball team, Grand Rapids Rise women's volleyball team, and a new soccer team to begin in 2027 with the completion of a new 8,500 seat stadium. In addition to several hotels in the area, a companion venue to the arena in the center of downtown, is DeVos Place. This venue is home to the performance of the Grand Rapids Symphony, the Grand Rapids Ballet, and the Opera. In 2026, an exciting new concert venue, called the Acrisure Amphitheater, opened with a plethora of entertainment options. Just a half mile from downtown and other multipurpose venues, this 12,000-capacity, state-of-the-art stadium is poised to capture major outdoor concerts and prime entertainment acts.

Perhaps the most signature cultural arts event in Grand Rapids ArtPrize. This international attraction features a competitive public art event throughout downtown, and involves a large-scale art competition.



PROCEDURE FOR CANDIDACY

Review of applications for the President and CEO position will begin immediately and continue until an appointment is made. To assure full consideration, applications should be received by **September 4th, 2026** and must include:

- A letter of interest addressing the strategic objectives and qualifications identified in the profile;
- A current curriculum vitae; and
- The contact information (email and phone) for five professional references, including their relationship to the candidate (References will be contacted at a later date in the search process and only with the permission of the candidate).

The Grand Rapids Public Museum is being assisted by AGB Search. Application materials should be submitted through the AGB Search portal system here: <http://bit.ly/4eqLC3F>

Please direct nominations and expressions of interest or any questions regarding the application process to: GRPMCEO@agbsearch.com

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▼ *The Grand Rapids Public Museum is an equal-opportunity employer. It is the Public Museum's policy to provide equal employment opportunities at all times without regard to age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, language differences, nationality, parental status, physical, mental and developmental abilities, race, religion, sexual orientation, skin color, socioeconomic status, and any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local laws. Each employee is responsible for assisting the Public Museum in maintaining a climate that provides equal employment opportunities for all employees.*